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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 002770

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SUBJECT: NEW GENDARMERIE DIRECTOR WILL LIKELY STRENGTHEN
THE FORCE,S ROLE

REF: A. AMMAN 2709
[1](#)B. AMMAN 2490
[1](#)C. AMMAN 1896
[1](#)D. AMMAN 1749

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: As part of a broader shuffling of senior positions in the Jordanian Government (ref A), a Royal Decree on December 15 replaced Gendarmerie director Major General (MG) Tawfiq Halalmeh with a retired Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) General, MG Tawfiq Tawalbeh. Sources in the JAF also say that King Abdullah II will likely soon appoint another retired JAF General to replace MG Mazen Al Qa'adi as head of the Public Security Directorate (PSD).

[1](#)2. (C) Contacts in the JAF and the Gendarmerie believe this is a clear signal the King plans to strengthen the role of the Gendarmerie in internal security and improve coordination between it and PSD. Since the Gendarmerie was established as an independent security force in January 2009, the two police forces have been plagued with operational missteps and bureaucratic jockeying which some observers say may have contributed to violence during civil disturbances in separate incidents in Ajloun, East Amman, Ma'an, and Aqaba this year (ref B, C, D). PSD officials fear that under the new leadership, the Gendarmerie may be empowered to exceed its legal authorities, which PSD believes limits it to supporting PSD only when called. End Summary.

New Gendarmerie Director Close to King

[1](#)3. (C) Sources in JAF and PSD say MG Tawalbeh was handpicked by the King and is a personal friend, known to the King from his own service in the JAF. As a Colonel in JAF, Tawalbeh commanded an armored brigade in which the King (then Prince and a Captain in JAF) had served as a unit commander. Contacts say Tawalbeh is not well known by Minister of Interior Nayef Qadi who may not have been consulted on his appointment.

[1](#)4. (C) Contacts also say the appointment is significant because it is the first time that the head of this security force has been selected directly from the military. The previous director was serving as a Lieutenant Colonel in the JAF when he was asked to lead a unit within PSD's Special Police (the legacy institution to the Gendarmerie). He rose to command of the force from within the PSD as have all previous directors. MG Tawalbeh retired from the JAF in 2005 and has been studying law since then.

A Stronger Gendarmerie in the Making

15. (C) Contacts in PSD and JAF say that Tawalbeh's appointment to head the Gendarmerie, and the possible selection of another JAF General to head PSD, signals a renewed focus on strengthening the Gendarmerie and improving coordination between the two police services.

16. (SBU) Since the Special Police split from PSD in January, 2009 to form the Gendarmerie, this new force has suffered from weak administrative and other support functions, and lack of support from the Ministry of Interior (MOI). Although widely viewed as having a capable cadre of approximately 15,000 members with specialized training in SWAT and riot control, the Gendarmerie has lagged in fully standing up its administrative departments and internal courts; in strategic planning; and in lobbying effectively for resources within the MOI.

17. (SBU) In addition, the Gendarmerie and PSD have been plagued by coordination problems since the Gendarmerie's inception. In major civil disturbances this year in Ajloun, East Amman, Ma'an, and Aqaba in which both Gendarmerie and PSD deployed, the forces were left pointing fingers at each other with accusations of operational missteps each says resulted in unnecessary violence.

18. (C) Tawalbeh is viewed as someone who will be effective in handling both of these issues because of his independence from the MOI and his relationship with the King -- especially if he has a JAF colleague as his partner at the helm of PSD. At the same time, PSD officers close to the current PSD

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Director, MG Mazen Al Qa'adi, say they fear that under the new leadership the Gendarmerie may grow to exceed its legal authority and take over key policing functions now performed by PSD.

19. (C) COMMENT: The Gendarmerie is emerging as a critical element in Jordan's internal security architecture, especially because of its specialized capabilities in riot control and counter-terrorism. Since it was established, the Embassy and USG security assistance programs such as the Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) program have formed valuable partnerships with the Gendarmerie which we expect will not be affected by the change in leadership. Strengthening the Gendarmerie's support infrastructure and the coordination between it and PSD, if it materializes under the new director, would be a welcome improvement. END COMMENT
Beecroft